

VZCZCXRO4345

RR RUEHAG RUEHAO RUEHCD RUEHGD RUEHGO RUEHMC RUEHNG RUEHNL RUEHRD
RUEHROV RUEHRS RUEHSL RUEHSR RUEHTM
DE RUEHCV #1477/01 3241626
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 201626Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0023
INFO EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 001477

SIPDIS

NOFORN

HQSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
DEPARTMENT PASS TO AID/OTI
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL LEIPZIG
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI
AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PASS TO AMEMBASSY GRENADA
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PASS TO AMCONSUL QUEBEC
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PASS TO AMCONSUL RECIFE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/11/20

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: PSUV HOLDS "TRANSPARENT" INTERNAL ELECTIONS, BUT REFUSES TO
PUBLISH RESULTS

CLASSIFIED BY: Robin D. Meyer, Political Counselor, DOS, POL; REASON:
1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) Summary: President Chavez's United Socialist Party of
Venezuela (PSUV) held nationwide elections on a rainy November 15
for its party congress (reftel). Despite repeatedly trumpeting the
balloting as a display of transparency and democracy that the
opposition lacks, the PSUV abruptly changed its tune the evening of
the vote and refused to release the results - presumably due to
widespread abstentionism. The following day, PSUV leaders said the
voting statistics were private information that only the parties
and Chavez had the "sovereign right" to know. An electoral expert
assessed to Poloff that the low turnout was indicative of internal
party schisms, poor organization of the base, and weak leadership.
Nevertheless, he said it does not represent a break between the
party faithful and Chavez himself. End Summary.

PSUV FAITHFUL STAY HOME ON ELECTION DAY

12. (SBU) The PSUV held elections November 15 to select 772
delegates to its party congress; the party had announced previously
its decision to grant Chavez the authority to hand-pick the
remaining 228 delegates. Throughout the voting day, PSUV
spokespeople pledged that the National Electoral Council (CNE)
would release the results within several hours after the closure of
the polls. However, the poll closing was eventually pushed from
5pm to 7pm - presumably to receive stragglers - and the CNE did not
disclose the results as promised. Media reporting from all over
Venezuela the next day indicate that only 40 to 50 percent of the 2
million party members registered with the PSUV had voted. (Note:
By way of comparison, Chavez won the February 2009 referendum with
6 million votes. End Note.) Vanessa Davies, the PSUV's press
coordinator, announced November 16 that "there is no reason to know
the [turnout] results, they are figures for the party and for
Comandante Chavez. The party leadership is holding them, it's
their sovereign right, just like for any political organization."
CNE President Tibisay Lucena claimed to be keeping the results "a
state secret." Jaqueline Farias, the executive-appointed Vice
President of the Caracas Federal District, said that the election

was a "duty" for party members to vote and asserted that they should vote in "as many [electoral] processes as we convoke."

13. (SBU) In the run-up to the election, PSUV spokespeople had lauded the balloting as evidence of the party's democratic and transparent internal selection process and repeatedly lambasted the "Fourth Republic" opposition for being "anti-democratic" structures that did not consult with their base. After Chavez cast his ballot, he told the press that the PSUV elections were an example of "bottom-up democracy" that "crushes the old politics of the elites, the false democracy where the people only were consulted once every five years." Chavez added that the opposition parties "are incapable of doing something similar to this. I challenge them to call an election with their base. Who is going to vote? Nobody, because they have no platform, no plan, discourse, leadership, nothing. What they have is hate." In the midst of the controversy over the non-disclosure of the PSUV results, Davies announced November 16 that opposition parties Accion Democratica and COPEI "are ashamed to have elections of their base and not continue to impose their representatives." She added that the "great winner of the November 15 electoral process is the Bolivarian revolution, which delivered a strong blow to the national and international rightwing, which has been left without words with this show of democracy that deepens the revolutionary process." She noted that the PSUV was reopening its registry to incorporate new "patrols."

CARACAS 00001477 002 OF 002

ABSTENTIONISM UNDERSCORES PSUV WEAKNESSES?

14. (C) Journalist and electoral expert Eugenio Martinez opined to Poloff November 17 that the PSUV's decision not to release the voting statistics was due to low turn-out, which is indicative of weak internal leadership, poor organization of the party's base, and internal schisms within Chavismo. PSUV officials and even Chavez had also expressed concern during the election day over the impact of the rain on voter turn-out. Nevertheless, he warned that the abstentionism did not represent a rejection of Chavez himself. Martinez noted that Chavez has claimed that the PSUV has 7.2 million supporters - about the number of votes he received in his 2006 reelection. However, only about 100,000 "socialist patrols" ("patrullas socialistas") have been constituted, made up of some 2.4 million party members. According to Martinez, of these patrols, only 64 percent nominated delegates to the party congress. As a result, only about 1.5 million of the party faithful were both eligible to vote and had participated in the nomination process, indicating that the failure was in organization in the run-up to the election.

15. (C) Martinez went on to highlight that "Chavez was not one of the voting options" nor did he personally endorse the candidates up for vote on November 15, since the PSUV had granted him the right to appoint his favored candidates to the remaining 20 percent of the seats. Martinez opined that without Chavez's direct involvement, the patrol members had no incentive to vote for candidates which might not represent their interests. He noted that this mistrust among the patrols - which should, in theory, be comprised of the most militant Chavistas - is indicative of competing factions within the PSUV which are largely regionally-based. Martinez warned that this could prove particularly problematic for the PSUV in selecting candidates for the 2010 National Assembly elections, and he predicted that Chavez would have to personally and directly endorse those candidates "like never before." Martinez suggested that the PSUV would undergo a major internal purge following this election disaster in order to counter the perception that Chavez's claims of party

membership were outright fabrications. He added that the experience should be a warning to the opposition parties about the necessity of creating a real electoral base of supporters.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) The November 15 election flub is embarrassing for the PSUV, but is unlikely to be tied directly to Chavez given his limited public participation in its organization. It will likely rouse Chavez and the PSUV to intensify their organizational efforts before the 2010 elections. The PSUV party congress will also likely continue to be used as a rhetorical weapon to undercut the legitimacy of the opposition parties, which lack transparent mechanisms to select party leaders or candidates. End Comment.
DUDDY